

**WSDOT Aviation Division Monthly Update
January 2003**

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1. Online Registration Now A Reality

The Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division is now offering online registration for pilots and aircraft owners. The new program will allow pilots and aircraft owners to pay state registration fees online with a credit card through a secured Bank of America site.

The new online registration program enables WSDOT to expand its customer service offerings with email alerts, pilot guide updates, monthly news updates, current training schedules and a new state airport map. Pilots and aircraft owners are required by state law to register with the WSDOT. Historically, aviators registered by mail and in person. "We recognized just how much aviators are using the Internet for online ground school, aviation news and purchasing equipment," said Nisha Hanchinamani, WSDOT Aviation Registration Manager.

While registering online is convenient and customer friendly, it is cost effective. "In these times of tight resources and soaring airport needs, we know aviators will appreciate that the state is improving processing costs and saving money," said Director John Sibold.

2. Growing Pains for Online Registration

Online registration allows customers log on by using their email address and password as their ID. "Since we do not have email addresses for all our customers, aviators registered in 2002 will receive an assigned user ID and password in their registration renewal letters which they can change to their email address," said Hanchinamani. As well, a secured site through Bank of America enables convenient credit card use for registration.

Online registration is available for both pilot and aircraft registration by going to WSDOT Aviation's web site (www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation) and clicking on pilot or aircraft registration.

Registration fees pay for the state's air search and rescue operations, aviation educational programs and Washington state-operated airport maintenance. WSDOT's education program is designed to increase aviation safety, enhance pilot knowledge, and offer refresher clinics to keep certifications current for registered pilots, aircraft owners and mechanics.

Pilots and aircraft owners who prefer to renew by mail may continue to do so by downloading the registration forms from the WSDOT Aviation web site and mailing the completed form and check for \$8.00 to WSDOT Aviation, PO Box 3367, Arlington WA 98223.

3. Early Online Registration Returns Impressive

Washington state's pilots and aircraft owners are utilizing the WSDOT online registration program. In the first three days, the new online service collected over \$25,000. The online service reduces administration costs and processing time. "Since I arrived nearly a year ago, I committed to improving customer service and that is what we are doing. I found that many people did not know state registration was required and we confused aviators by not consolidating our pilot and aircraft registration," said Sibold.

4. Director Sibold Provides Legislature With Aviation Revenue Overview

WSDOT Aviation Director John Sibold briefed the Washington State Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) Tax Exempt Subcommittee an overview of aviation revenue in Washington which funds the airport grant and preservation programs. The aviation program is one of 17 programs in the WSDOT and represents less than 1 percent of the department's budget. The WSDOT Aviation is funded by aviation related taxes and fees. The major funding source is the tax on aircraft fuel. Pilot and aircraft registration fees are \$8 and the annual aircraft excise tax is based on the size of the aircraft. The Aeronautics Account is a special revenue source and motor vehicle funds cannot support aviation project, per law.

Due to the effects of September 11th and the variable fuel tax rate for aviation fuel, the WSDOT projects a reduction of airport preservation funds by \$800,000 for the 2003-2005 biennium. The 2001-2003 biennium provided nearly \$2 million in state grants to airports. The reduction in available funds will reduce the WSDOT ability to issue preservation grants to airports. Director John Sibold has directed staff to pursue federal funding options to help fill the \$800,000 gap in funds. "I am concerned by this funding trend," said Sibold. "Over \$10 million is needed annually just to maintain today's pavement condition across the state, and we only see \$3 million (state and federal funds combined) available."

5. Legislature Seeks Information on Aircraft Fuel Exemptions

Washington state assesses a fuel tax on aviation fuel at a rate of 3% of weighted average price per gallon. The tax has a floor of 5¢ and the current rate is 7¢ per gallon. While the greatest revenue source for airport preservation projects is an aviation fuel tax, over 90% of the users are exempt from paying the tax. The following use is exempt from paying the aviation fuel tax, per 82.42.025 RCW: commercial use, farm use, research, testing and training.

"Many of the exempt companies use Washington's airports, hangar and maintain their aircraft here but do not pay for the preservation of the airport. Right now, general aviation, particularly the recreational pilot with a single engine aircraft who is not exempt, pays the full cost of preserving system," John Sibold, WSDOT Aviation Director said while testifying before the Washington State Senate Tax Exempt Subcommittee.

"General aviation cannot carry the burden alone and unfortunately, we do not have enough revenue coming in to preserve Washington's system of airports," said Sibold. "No action is an action, and pavement crumbles over time. The aviation community needs to work together to keep the system together. Right now, the statewide pavement condition is a score of 74 out of 100 and aviation pavement failure occurs around a score of 60."

6. FAA Funding Program for Small Airports Expanded

Congress has agreed to use the updated National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) for federal fiscal year 2003 funding, expanding the number of general aviation airports to receive money. More pavement maintenance projects will be eligible for FAA funding through the non-primary entitlement program. Of the 129 public use airports in Washington, over half are airports contained in the NPIAS and are eligible to receive federal money. While the FAA has not had many dollars available for smaller general aviation airports in the past, the WSDOT recognizes how important the federal monies are to general aviation. The WSDOT encourages all NPIAS airports eligible to receive the non-primary entitlement funding to utilize the funding opportunity.

“Leveraging WSDOT grants with the new federal dollars will leave more state grants for airports who cannot receive federal monies,” said Stan Allison, WSDOT Aviation Operations Manager.

7. Airport Land Use Planning in Full Swing

The WSDOT has a major role in protecting airports from encroachment. The WSDOT is working with city and county governments and airports to implement the new state land use regulations. All cities, counties or towns in Washington state are required to review and update their comprehensive plans and development regulations to ensure compliance with new provisions of the Growth Management Act. During the 2002, the Washington State Legislature extended the time for compliance.

The first updates are required to be completed by the following dates:

December 1, 2004 – Clallam, Clark, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom counties.

December 1, 2005 – Cowlitz, Island, Lewis, Manson, San Juan, Skagit, and Skamania.

December 1, 2006 – Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Spokane, and Yakima.

December 1, 2007 – Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla and Whitman.

8. Current Comprehensive Plan Update Efforts

The WSDOT presented the Airport Land Use Compatibility Program to the Senate Transportation Committee. This proactive program is in its sixth year and over 72 airports are now protected through comprehensive plan policies and development regulations. The following are communities involved in comprehensive plan or development regulation updates.

City of Auburn: Comprehensive plan update – Auburn Municipal

City of Yakima: Mediation with the GMA Hearings Board to resolve several issues on a 2001 comp plan amendment and 2002 development regulations on 600 acres NW of Yakima Air Terminal.

Pierce County/Thun Field: proposed South Hill Community Plan and implementing zoning regulations.

Pierce County/Tacoma Narrows Airport: Gig Harbor Community Plan and implementing zoning regulations.

Chelan Municipal Airport: City of Chelan proposed amendments to comprehensive plan.

Kenmore Air Harbor: City of Kenmore Downtown Subarea Plan proposed implementing zoning regulations.

Arlington Airport: City of Marysville proposed Smokey Point Subarea Plan and implementing zoning regulations.

Bellingham International Airport: Whatcom County Essential Public Facilities Policy.

9. Jim Scott Welcomed to WSDOT as Airport Maintenance Supervisor

With experience flying hundreds of aircraft from hot air balloons to jet planes, Jim Scott joined the WSDOT team as Airport Maintenance Supervisor. This critical position sets an improved course for the 16 state operated airports as recreational destinations, opening beautiful scenic locations to the aviation community. Jim will focus on strengthening the relationships between WSDOT and the federal agencies the state leases eight of the airports from, including Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and National Park Service. “The state airports go well beyond helping pilots in emergency situations. They are destinations where families can picnic, camp or even better, offer ideal fishing spots,” said Scott. “We want to enhance our airports with improved visitor services like picnic tables, shelters and transportation to neighboring communities.” Scott recently kicked off the Adopt-an-Airport program as well.

In his spare time, Scott is the Manager of the NW EAA Fly-In in Arlington and grew up on an airport. “I want my own family, and my aviation family to have the same opportunities in aviation that were available to me as a child,” said Scott.

10. Desert Aire Airport Pursues Airport Improvements

Stan Allison, Aviation Operations Manager and Jim Scott traveled to the Desert Aire Airport in Mattawa to inspect their runway, taxiway and apron pavement surfaces. The Division had received a request for technical assistance from the Airport Commissioners on what would be the best way to preserve their asphalt. They also requested WSDOT inspect the cold patch asphalt that had been applied three years ago as a method of widening their taxiway. The cold patch has settled and created an uneven seam making it difficult to taxi safely. Jerry Roseburg, Region Materials Engineer from WSDOT North Central Region joined the team for the inspection with resulted in a recommendation to fog seal the apron as soon as possible and fog seal the runway thereafter. To address the cold seal patch issue, WSDOT is investigating different materials that might be used to fix the situation and estimate costs to remove and replace the entire section with new hot-mix asphalt.

11. Airport Operations Team on the Road in December

Stan Allison and Jim Scott visited and swapped stories with airports across the state, including the following:

Lynden Municipal Airport	Wilbur Municipal	Omak Municipal
Okanogan Municipal	Anderson Field	Electric City Airport
Odessa Municipal	Rosalia Municipal	Rogersburg State
Bandera State	Easton State	Skykomish State
Lake Wenatchee State	Lower Granite State	Little Goose State
Lower Monumental State	Desert Aire Municipal	

12. January Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic Well Attended

Over 135 flight instructors attended the Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic held in Tacoma, Washington. The clinic covered critical topics such as collision avoidance, human factors, instructor responsibilities, safety and the fundamentals of instruction. The clinics held four times a year are funded through the WSDOT registration program.

13. WSDOT Pursues Airport Cameras to Provide Pilots Real Time Weather Views

WSDOT is working with the University of Washington and WSDOT Northwest Region to install cameras at selected airports to offer real-time weather views. The airport program expands the well-used WSDOT cameras for automobile travel over the Cascade Mountains and Puget Sound Region. WSDOT hopes to have the first real-time camera views available on line by spring 2003.

14. Call For Award Nominations

WSDOT is calling for award nominations for the 2003 Airport of the Year award, Airport Manager of the Year, and Airport Volunteer of the Year. Email or mail your nominations to the WSDOT Aviation Outreach Coordinator at avioutc@wsdot.wa.gov or PO Box 3367, Arlington, WA 98223-3367. The call for nominations closes on February 14, 2003.

15. WSDOT sponsors the Northwest Aviation Conference and Trade Show Annual Banquet

WSDOT will host the annual banquet at the Northwest Aviation Conference and Trade Show at the Western Washington Fairgrounds in Puyallup, Washington. John Sibold, WSDOT Aviation Director will present the Aviation Hall of Fame Awards to the 2003 recipients as well as the Airport of the Year award, Airport Manager of the Year award and Airport Volunteer award. "We are increasing our participation at the trade show and will have several computers set up to help pilots and aircraft owners register at the event. We'll also have a few chairs available for customers to rest their feet, a hot commodity at the show," said Sibold.

16. If You Have Something to Say ... We are Listening

Email the WSDOT at avioutc@wsdot.wa.gov your thoughts and ideas on how we can preserve Washington's aviation system, ways to improve our communication and your needs for customer service.